

**Reflection on the Gospel-28th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A
(Matthew 22:1-14)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

The increasing wealth of the few and the growing divide between rich and poor, particularly in the developing world, are challenging us all to consider our attitudes to the planet's resources and to the economic system that maintains that imbalance. The economic divide is highlighted by the vulnerability to pandemic of those rendered poor and homeless in our world. Today's gospel brings a warning. Like the invited guests in Matthew's parable of the wedding banquet, we are in danger of turning our backs on a gracious invitation or "call" not only to share in but also to ensure that all God's creatures share in the fruits of the earth. The king's invitation to successive and diverse groups recalls Israel's prophetic tradition where God's ultimate reign is imaged as a feast of the best food and wine, not just for a privileged few, but for all.

Many other aspects of the parable are quite troubling. Its focus is on the human community. Privileged humans are the first to be invited: the invitation to the less privileged comes only after those on the initial guest list have refused to come. This aspect of the story hardly reflects the values of God's empire or reign. Furthermore, the violent retaliation of the spurned host is hard to reconcile with an image of God's reign. This is also true of the treatment of the guest without a wedding robe in a situation where none of the guests has had the opportunity to procure the right attire. It becomes clear that this is not a story to be taken literally. Rather, it invites the reader to critique interpretations that see the king's behaviour as a reflection of how God deals with God's creation.

So, what might this story be telling us? If we look again at the despotic aspects of the king's character, we might find there a reflection of our own capacity to look after ourselves at the expense of the poor and vulnerable of our world and of the other-than-human. We might find an image of our nation's long-term redirecting of the foreign aid budget towards keeping refugees from settling in our land. On the other hand, if we put ourselves in the place of the original audience, we might find ourselves quite amazed at the inclusiveness of the king in a world where the people on the street would never have been invited to such a wedding banquet. If we think about the wedding garment as symbolic of a "right" disposition or attitude in relation to the host, the company, and the riches to be shared, we might be drawn to handle Earth's precious resources with a little more care for the common good of all the inhabitants of our planet. Our gospel tradition tells us that God's empire will only be realised when all have the opportunity to share in the feast of life and when other-than-human Earth inhabitants have the resources that enable them to flourish.